

# WorkFirst Reform Partnership Training

*Non-Compliance Sanction*  
*April 2006*

## **Governor Gregoire's Directive**

- Renewed sense of mission.
- Reform the program to achieve better success for parents through community partnerships to weave a tighter safety net.
- WorkFirst must improve and provide supports to help parents find jobs and keep jobs, including child care.
- Parents must participate in the program or lose support
- The state will use Government Management, Accountability and Performance (GMAP) to oversee the program's results and outcomes.

## **WorkFirst Values**

- Work is the best avenue to break the cycle of poverty for families.
- Parents have a responsibility to take care of and provide for their children.
- The community, with the support of the state, has a responsibility to help low-income families.
- Every citizen in the state has the responsibility for the safety of our children.
- We all must be accountable in carrying out our parts of the program if we are to achieve success.

## **Overview**

Non-Compliance Sanction (NCS) policy is part of Gov. Gregoire's directive that all WorkFirst paths should lead to employment. Parents need to accept the program's offerings and supports designed to help them find and keep jobs. The NCS policy is a tool of last resort which will be used as a consequence for parents who refuse to engage in the program. Before termination, however, DSHS will ensure that all WorkFirst families receive equitable treatment, enhanced assessment / engagement services, increased access to training opportunities and safeguards to protect the most vulnerable.

## **Non Compliance Sanction Policy**

The NCS policy would terminate TANF cash aid to customers after 6 months in a row of refusal to participate. Families who are terminated can reapply immediately, but must participate for 4 consecutive weeks before they are approved for cash. Benefits are restored back to the date the applicant establishes financial eligibility.

Second and subsequent terminations occur after refusal to participate for 3 months in a row.

## **Opportunities**

As part of the Governor's vision to expand opportunities to WorkFirst families, the NCS policy will be implemented jointly with new opportunities to increase income and self-sufficiency.

- The Comprehensive Evaluation will determine the best employment pathway for WorkFirst parents. The Evaluation focuses on:
  - Foundation information similar to the current Screening and Evaluation process.
  - Educational assessment done by community and technical colleges.
  - Work Skills assessment done by Employment Security.The goal of the evaluation process is to tailor a plan to ensure that parents are engaged in the pathway that will move them most effectively toward self-sufficiency.
- Educational opportunities have been enhanced to offer basic and vocational training to motivated parents, giving them a chance for stable living wage employment. Training can be short or last up to a year; geared to placing the right parents in the right training to best help them establish self-sufficiency.

## **Accountability**

Along with increased opportunities, expectations and changes to the sanction policy come increased accountability. Closing cases after

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sustained refusal to participate will not occur without appropriate safeguards. The sanction policy will be used only as a tool of last resort when all efforts to engage the parent have failed; and then only after case staffings, child safety reviews, case reviews and a state-level review panel determine that imposing a sanction or termination is appropriate. Our process will ensure that we have:

- Provided the parent with every opportunity to participate
- Addressed all possible barriers to compliance
- Applied the sanction processes consistently and in consideration of cultural barriers and societal issues, and;
- Addressed the safety of children.

To ensure transparency in our process, the University of Washington School of Social Work will conduct reviews of the NCS sanction policy prior to its implementation and periodically thereafter.